

INSIDE JOURNALISM

Volume 1, Issue 9

Keep the 'Ad'itude

ON DECEMBER 6TH 1877,
WE WERE ALREADY HERE.

*Happy Anniversary to THE WASHINGTON POST (125 years)
from MAGRUDER'S GROCERY (127 years)*



*It's Okay To Have a Sass
in Advertising Because
Often It Helps To Inform
and Entertain. Perhaps
More Importantly,
Advertisements Help
Newspapers Pay the
Bills.*

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America



An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

INSIDE Journalism: Advertising

KidsPost Article: "And Now, Words of Our Sponsors"

The INSIDE Journalism curriculum guide provides information and resources that can be used on many grade levels and in many subject areas. Here are a few suggestions for using the material in this guide.

Think About Advertising

The money that readers pay to buy the newspaper isn't anywhere near enough to pay for putting it out every day. The money people plunk in the newspaper box or pay the delivery guy doesn't pay for the paper the newspaper is printed on. In addition, the owner of the newspaper has to pay salaries to its writers, editors, photographers, printers and many other employees. It has expenses in its national and international bureaus as well as equipment to buy and utilities to pay.

The number of pages of a paper on any day is usually determined by the amount of advertising rather than the amount of news. That's why the paper gets really thick around Christmas, when advertising is abundant.

News and ads appear side by side in the paper, but the news department and the ad department are completely separate. Even though the newspaper needs advertising to pay its bills, the editors and writers cannot afford to think about the newspaper's advertisers when writing stories. They must always focus on informing readers honestly and openly. Editors decide what news to print without thinking about whether it will make an advertiser happy or not.

Find Advertising

Distinguish the two basic types of ads found in The Washington Post: classified ads and display ads. Classified ads are in smaller type and appear in their section under headings such as "Help Wanted," "D.C. Houses, Sale" and "Cars." Those Mother's

Day, Father's Day and Valentine's Day greetings are also classified ads. The Washington Post has more than 250 classifications for classified ads. These include sales & auctions, pets & animals, transportation and obituaries.

Display ads, usually purchased by businesses or organizations, are larger. Display ads often include illustrations, are sometimes printed in color and are scattered throughout the paper—except on the front page. Most American papers will not put ads on the front page.

Use today's newspaper to find examples of classified and display ads. Have students place them in categories.

Meet the Ad Designer

The Advertising Department of The Post has about 450 employees. Some sell ads; others work with clients. Some design ads. Still others manage the department and keep it running. Give students "Meet the Advertising Designer."

Design an Ad

Advertising reflects the product, the brand image, the time period and the target audience. The client has certain information to convey; it is the collaboration of the advertising representative and artist that results in the printed promotion. Give students "The Making of a (Fake) Ad." Discuss the steps. Note how much information is in the first drawing (1). Who is the target audience for the ad? What information is most important to convey to the target audience? Compare

In the Know

Advergame: Using a game to draw attention to, and promote a product; first introduced in the late 1990s.

Advertisement: Newspaper classified or display, poster or electronic promotion of a product or service

Brand name: Name given by the manufacturer or merchant to an article or service to distinguish it as produced or sold by him. Also called trade name.

Classified: Advertising, usually in words only, paid for by the lines of an ad or by the word

Consumer: One who acquires goods or services for direct use or ownership rather than for resale or use in production and manufacturing

Demography: Statistical study of human populations, for size and density, distribution and vital statistics; such as the "youth demographics"

Display Ad: Block size or page ads in various sizes that usually combine illustrations and written text about the business or merchandise to be sold

Market: The audience the advertiser wants to reach; those intended to purchase an item or service, such as "women's market" or "teen market"

Product Placement: Commercial goods placed in movies and television shows

Target: the segment of the population to which an advertiser aims its message and product or service

Typeface: The style of the letters used for everything written in the newspaper from the masthead to the classified ads

the black-and-white ad (3) to the color final ad (4).

Give students "How to Design a



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Display Ad.” After going over the guidelines for creating a display ad, review the finished ad in “The Making of a (Fake) Ad” to see if it has essential information and meets most of the guidelines. The final ad needs a phone number or other contact information.

You also can critique display ads in today’s newspaper.

Give students “My Display Advertisement.” Students are to design an ad using the information given.

Math Matters

What do ads cost? It depends on size and location in the paper and sometimes the day of the week. (Sundays cost more because more people read the paper on that day.) A few lines in a weekday newspaper might go for \$20. A full page on a Sunday costs many thousands of dollars. What should the student ad designer charge the client for the ad he designed? The designer wants to make \$30/hour and cover expenses. Make a list of expenses (paper, art materials, computer if created using the computer) and record the time spent designing the ad.

Talk About the Times

A newspaper is a huge marketplace. It’s advertising reflects time of year, location and its community. In cold weather, ads for woolen goods, heaters and snow removal products can be found. In rural areas, ads for fertilizer, tractors and feed can be found. What products would students expect to find in Miami, Florida, newspapers? (Have them look on the weather map for the temperature.)

Give students the A section of today’s Washington Post. How many companies have display ads in the A section? What do the products and services advertised tell them about the time of year and lifestyle in the D.C. metropolitan area?

Know Your Rights

All forms of speech, including artistic, literary, musical and political, are protected from government control by the freedom of speech clause of the First Amendment. “I Want My MTV: Music Censorship in America” begins with a brief history of music censorship that can be used by teachers for background or given to students to read.

Divide students into small groups and provide them with copies of “Censored or Not?” Ask students to discuss which of the events they think did in fact happen.

Teacher’s Answers: Each of these scenarios occurred as written. Further information on the above can be found through The First Amendment Center (www.freedomforum.org) and the American Civil Liberties Union (www.aclu.org).

Discussion questions for use after doing the “Censored or Not?” exercise are provided.

If time allows, give students role cards for “Voluntary Parental Advisory Labels?” committee hearing. Students will be taken back to the mid-1980s to examine the establishing of voluntary parental advisory labels. Through conducting a simulated U.S. Senate committee hearing, students will understand both sides of the parental warning label argument.

AD Vantages

On the Web

► <http://www.athenaawards.com/>

The ATHENA Awards

The Newspaper Association of America’s ATHENA program recognizes creative excellence in newspaper advertising.

Teachers could review the 2002 and 2001 winners. Select examples to inspire students or to illustrate how the basics of design have been used.

► <http://www.adage.com/>

AdAge online

News and ad reviews for more in-depth look at the industry or sample videos of current TV ads for fun.

► <http://www.aaf.org/>

American Advertising Federation

College, career and advertising industry resources

In Print

Tim Harrower. *The Newspaper Designer’s Handbook*. 2002.

All areas of newspaper design are covered in this excellent resource. Examples and principles of design apply to advertisements.

Robin Williams. *Robin Williams Design Workshop*. 2000.

Typography and design work together to communicate. Use the projects for logos and business cards to design better ads.



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Some students will be asked to argue as PMRC members who supported parental warning labels on music because they felt the adult topics were harmful to children due to their violent and sexual content. Other students will represent the musicians who objected to warning labels because they felt this infringed on the First Amendment guaranteed freedom of speech rights of many of their listeners. Other students will also have an opportunity to play the legislators who were charged with listening to both sides and providing recommendations about action.

After students have prepared their arguments, the hearing will commence with representatives from each side presenting their testimony. Senators will then comment on the testimony and ask questions of each side. Following a time to reflect on the testimony, the senators will then reveal their recommendations in favor or against parental advisory labels.

Following this exercise, discuss with the students whether they agreed with the positions they were assigned, and whether they could now appreciate different aspects of arguments with which they had originally disagreed. End the exercise with any additional thoughts the students have on the value of freedom of expression protections of the First Amendment and the dangers of censorship.

Enrichment

1. Learn more about viral marketing. Read “Plug (the Product) and Play: Advertisers Use Online Games to Find, Entice Customers,” by Ellen Edwards, Washington Post staff writer. This Jan. 26, 2003, article reports the latest use of advergimes, blogs and webisodes. Ask students to list all the Web sites they visit to play games. How many of these are tied to products such as

M&Ms, McDonald’s and Sponge Bob?

2. Talk about Ethics. In her article, Ellen Edwards, stated: “By federal law, advertisers are not allowed to collect information from kids younger than 13. But there’s no prohibition against collecting information from their parents. If a child is playing advergimes on the Hot Wheels site and wants to register for its Birthday Club, his parents must provide name, address, e-mail address and birth dates—for both parent and child.” Do students think they should be allowed to fill in the blanks themselves? Is it ethical to get addresses for promotional mailings through registration requirements?

3. More Talk about Ethics. Read “The Spy Who Loved Nokia, And Other Next-Stage Ads: TV Plots Thicken with Real Brands.” Post writer Frank Ahrens reports on commercial products being placed in television episodes. Ahrens wrote: “Even though television product placement is in its infancy, it is already drawing fire from anti-commercialism groups for blurring the line between advertising and entertainment. The television industry, meanwhile, is debating issues such as what say actors, writers and others should have in the placement of products.” Ask students if they can recall what candy appeared in E.T. Are students able to name any brands or beverages that appear in TV episodes of their favorite shows? For example, what computers are being used? Discuss examples in the article. This may be great product placement, but is it ethical?

Get It

➤ http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-adv/marketplace/wpmark_main.htm

Marketplace

Online classifieds and advertising, coupons and bargains, specials and deals

➤ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A43992-2003Jan25.html>

“Plug (the Product) and Play:

Advertisers Use Online Games to Find, Entice Customers,” Ellen Edwards, January 26, 2003; Page A1

➤ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A13517-2002Sep27.html>

“The Spy Who Loved Nokia, And Other Next-Stage Ads: TV Plots Thicken With Real Brands,” Frank Ahrens, September 28, 2002; Page A1

➤ <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/Speech/arts/Index.aspx>

First Amendment Center

Use information in the Arts & Free Expression section. “Free Speech & Music” and “Rating & Labeling Entertainment” are most pertinent. In “Free Speech & Music” section, you can download a teacher’s guide with lesson plans, song lyrics and resources. In the “Cases & Resources” section are links to court cases, Web sites and articles.

➤ <http://www.riaa.org>

Recording Industry Association of America

The trade group representing the recording industry of America provides copyright basics, positions on voluntary labels, music and the Internet freedom of speech.

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I was born in 1951 in Pennsylvania. My dad was a college dean and later president of another college so I grew up on and around college campuses. I was introduced to photography and the darkroom in high school, and photography has been an important part of my art ever since. I had a drive to draw from an early age and majored in art in college. After graduation I lived and worked on a dairy farm for a number of years (a seemingly odd digression, but it was the 1970s, after all), but I always pursued art in one way or another. I really began my artistic career only after getting married and having my first child. I worked at a small design firm in Philadelphia doing design and production (the old-fashioned way with rubber cement and rapidograph pens and type set by a type house) before coming to The Washington Post in 1985. Within two years we had our first computer—a Macintosh Plus with a whopping one megabyte of ram and a 20 megabyte hard drive. I’m still at The Post and in the same position today, but my job has evolved over the years along with the technology and so has remained interesting and challenging.



Meet the Ad Designer

Randy Mays

Did you go to art school? Do you think it is helpful to go to art school?

I majored in art at West Chester University in Pennsylvania. I sometimes think if I had it to do over, I would try to go to the best art school I could get into. I just wasn’t that clear on my direction at the time.

When did you know you wanted to design advertising?

After my first child was born, I found myself needing to get my career going and graphic design seemed to be the best bet. I got some training and found that I both liked it and was pretty good at it.

How much control do you have over what the published ad looks like?

That varies a lot. Sometimes an advertiser will have a very clear idea of

what he wants and dictates the design. More often there is collaboration. Even when I’m given free rein, I have to consider the purpose of the ad.

How much time do you spend designing an ad?

A thing of beauty is a joy forever, but a work of art takes at least an hour. An ad can take even longer.

Do you design your own typography?

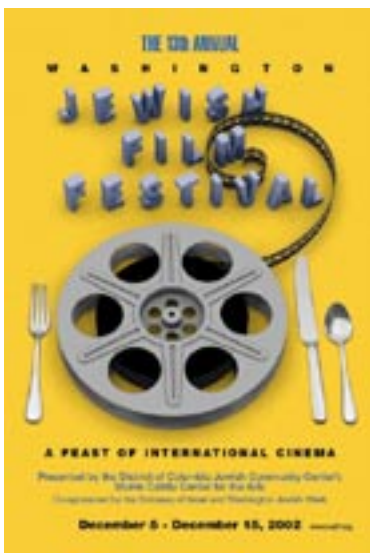
Yes.

What are the most important elements to include in an ad?

Successful advertising drives business to the advertiser, so the company name, logo and means to obtaining the product or service are vital.

What would you like students to know about your profession?

1. Advertising design is visual art in the service of commerce. 2. There are many parts of our society that require design and advertising so you learn about many different things, and you get to be creative. 3. There are always deadlines and at a newspaper they can be very tight, but deadlines ensure that things get done. 4. Most importantly, you can make a living in the visual arts.



Are readers to think about feasting on films? Why the striking yellow for background?

Randy Mays designed this display ad in 2002 for the Jewish Film Festival.

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The Making of a (Fake) Ad

Most advertisers send their ads to the newspaper ready to be published. They use advertising agencies to create them. Some smaller companies ask The Post to produce ads for them. The paper has artists and writers who work with them to help create attractive ads.

KidsPost asked Post advertising artist **Donna McCullough** to create a special (but not real) ad, just as she would for a regular customer.



She started by finding the subject of the ad (a school for wizards) and its purpose (encourage students to take classes at the school). McCullough prepared a first drawing (1). It has plenty of information and some punctuation errors. Is the ad's audience prospective students or their parents?

She corrected and changed it several times (we don't get to see these drafts) as she talked with the advertiser (KidsPost), trying out different parts of the picture (2) before putting words and art together in a black-and-white final version (3) and color final version (4).

For a better look at the first drawing and the black and white final ad, go to Pages 7 and 8.

1

Pursue Your True Destiny

Become a certified wizard with our 4 year program.

Our complete wizard training program includes:

- History of Magic
- Potions & Spells
- Magical Beasts-Taming & Training
- Defense Against the Dark Arts

Challenging courses. Renowned teachers. Individualized attention. Wide range of extracurricular activities. Award winning Aerial Sports Team.

Hogworth

School of Wizardry and Sorcery

Now is the time to check your knowledge while building your confidence and character!

2

3

SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT & SORCERY

Hogwarts

School of Wizardry and Sorcery

Become a certified wizard in 4 years!

- History of Magic
- Potions & Spells
- Magical Beasts Taming & Training
- Defense Against the Dark Arts

Challenging courses. Renowned teachers. Individualized attention. Wide range of extracurricular activities. Award winning Aerial Sports Team.

Pursue Your Destiny at Hogwarts.

4

SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT & SORCERY

Hogwarts

Become a certified wizard in 4 years!

Our wizard training includes:

- History of Magic
- Potions & Spells
- Magical Beasts-Taming & Training
- Defense Against the Dark Arts

Challenging courses. Renowned teachers. Individualized attention. Wide range of extracurricular activities. Award winning Aerial Sports Team.

Pursue Your Destiny at Hogwarts

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Preliminary sketch

Pursue Your True Destiny

Become a certified wizard with our 4 year program.

Our complete wizard training course includes:

- History of Magic by Sir Ralph Houdini
 - Potions & Spells by Madame Cured
 - Magical Beasts- Taming & Training by Zoey Logic
 - Defense Against the Dark Arts by Dray Dragoon
- along with equally important and interesting subjects.

Challenging courses, Professional teachers,

Small classes, Individualized attention.

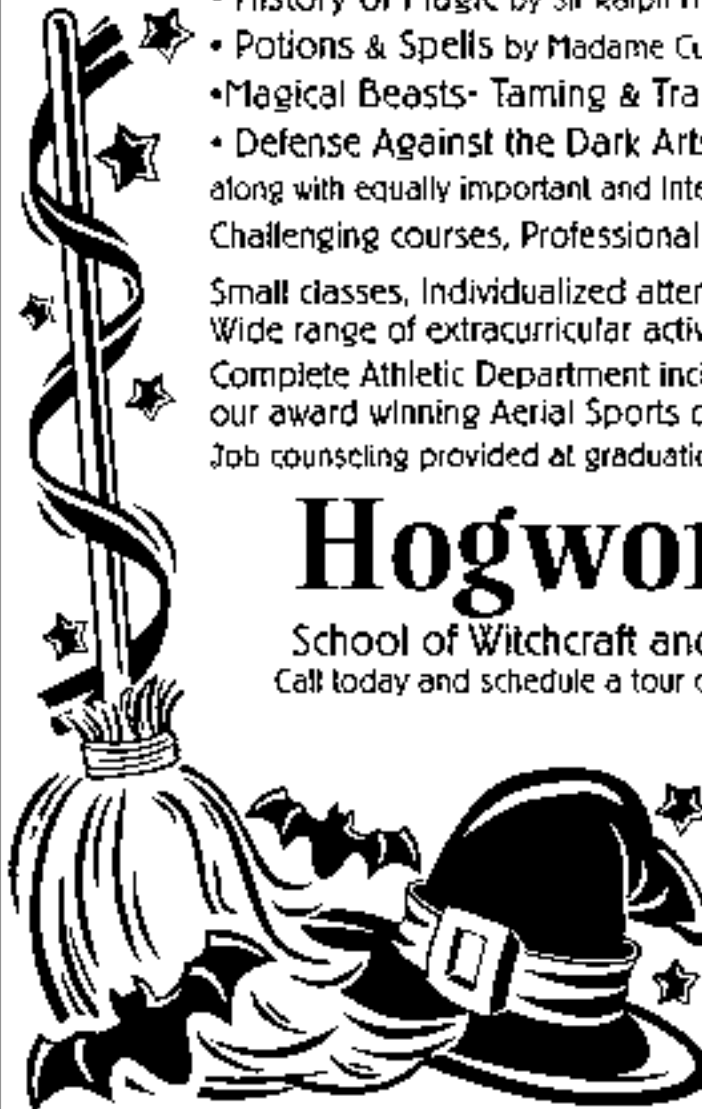
Wide range of extracurricular activities.

Complete Athletic Department including our award winning Aerial Sports division.

Job counseling provided at graduation.

Hogworth

School of Witchcraft and Sorcery
Call today and schedule a tour of our facilities



Now is the time
to stretch your
knowledge while
building your
confidence and
character.

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Final black-and-white advertisement

SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT & SORCERY

Hogwarts


School of Witchcraft and Sorcery

Become a certified wizard in 4 years!



- Our wizard training includes:
 - History of Magic
 - Potions & Spells
 - Magical Beasts-Taming & Training
 - Defense Against the Dark Arts

Challenging courses.
Renowned teachers.
Individualized attention.
Wide range of extracurricular activities.
Award winning Aerial Sports Team.



Pursue Your Destiny at Hogwarts

for info call: **703-555-0000**

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How To Design a Display Ad

A display ad, usually purchased by businesses or organizations, should grab a reader’s attention within three seconds.

The display ad should stand out from the “grayness” created by the articles. In order to do this, the ad designer

needs to balance white, or negative, space with the words and photographs or artwork of the ad.

The purpose of a display ad is to interest the newspaper reader in buying the product or service. Don’t confuse the reader. He or she needs to know what is being sold.

COPY

The words that convey information

Emphasize the most important information. Are there certain items on sale, a new product to introduce or a seasonal special? If everything has equal billing, nothing will seem important.

Make sure the words and images you use will communicate to the target audience.

Be consistent in wording in the ad. For example, if you are focusing on teen buyers, word the copy to talk to teens, not teens and their parents in the same ad.

Select a font that reflects the product (dependable, playful) and the target audience (ageless, youthful).

Avoid all caps and reverse type. These are more difficult to read.

Include information that is essential to locate the business.

- the name of the business
- the address and phone number of each location
- Web address
- store hours

In addition, some businesses will want to include

- credit cards that are accepted
- business logo
- standing statement: “Since 1964 ...”

IMAGE

The photograph or art that sets mood

Make sure the image(s) you use relate to the product or service that is being

advertised.

Capture the target audience with the appropriate image.

It is better to have one large image than four smaller ones. If a series of ads will be run, change the image but keep the “look” consistent.

WHITE SPACE

The open space that defines the ad

Don’t fill every inch of the ad with copy and image, but give your client a reason to pay for white space.

Group essential information to assist your reader.

Most ads are defined by borders. In some ads, the shape of the artwork or photograph’s edge can define the ad’s dimensions better than tool lines.



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My Display Advertisement

You are the advertising artist for a newspaper. Pat's Pets has purchased a display ad. You can design a vertical or horizontal ad. You have the following information about the business. You decide what should be in the ad.

CUSTOMER

Pat's Pets
 111 Main Street
 Washington, D.C. 20009
 1-334-555-1212
www.patspets.com

DATE AD IS TO RUN

November 20

SIZE OF AD

5 inches by 7 inches

FACTS ABOUT ADVERTISER

- Established business in 1973
- Owner employees students from your neighborhood
- Sells fish, cats, dogs, hamsters, guinea pigs and ferrets
- Sells grooming products, special diet foods and toys for pets
- Open six days a week, 10-9 p.m.
- No credit cards accepted

OBJECTIVES THE ADVERTISER WISHES TO ACHIEVE

- Promote special on fish
- Sell oversupply of hamsters
- Develop teen and younger customers

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE AD

- Wants to include logo (you design it)
- Wants artwork (your choice)



What Advertising Executives Have to Say

Kunie DeVorkin and Joyce Richardson, executives in the Post's advertising department, together answered some KidsPost questions.

What makes a good ad?

A good ad gets your attention (color, big words, pictures), tells a story and gets you to take action.

How do you decide where ads run in the paper?

It's like putting together a big puzzle every day—fitting ads and news stories on pages. Sometimes an advertiser may pay extra for a certain spot.

How do you make sure the readers don't confuse ads and news?

We put "advertising" on top of any ad that might be mistaken for news. Sometimes we use lettering or graphics different from those you see in the news.

Does the Post ever refuse to run an ad?

We do sometimes refuse an ad. We try to make sure that ads are not offensive. You know, it's like your mom telling you not to burp in public.

Can kids take out ads in The Post?

Yes, as long as your parents provide and approve the content and the money.

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A Changing Community, A Changing Role

In 1980, The Washington Post published a story about Jimmy, an eight-year-old heroin addict. The Post community of readers and D.C. leaders responded to the child's plight. They wanted to find and to help Jimmy. The article was written by Janet Cooke, a 27-year-old reporter. Some on The Post staff (including Courtland Milloy, Vivian Aplin-Brownlee and Milton Coleman) and some residents of D.C. began to doubt her account of Jimmy, especially when Jimmy could not be located.

Vivian Aplin-Brownlee, who had been Cooke's first editor at The Post, was apprehensive because a) She thought the fashion-conscious Cooke would be "out of place" in the setting, b) "No pusher would shoot up a child in her presence," c) "Some of the language didn't ring true," d) The story's direction had changed drastically from one "about the use of

heroin that causes skin ulcers," and e) "In her eagerness to make a name she would write farther than truth would allow."

The writing was so compelling that Cooke received a Pulitzer Prize in 1981 for it. When The Toledo Blade, Cooke's former employer, told the AP that their reporting of her educational background did not agree with the Blade's files, the AP searched records and found that Cooke had deceived The Post about her credentials. Post editors asked her to tell the truth. Ben Bradlee called this time period the "the darkest chapter of my newspaper life."

A day after Post editors confronted Cooke, she responded with a handwritten statment: "Jimmy's World' was in essence a fabrication. I never encountered or interviewed an 8-year-old heroin addict. The September 28, 1980, article in The Washington Post was a serious misrepresentation



FILE PHOTO—THE WASHINGTON POST

For a story about "Jimmy," an 8-year-old heroin addict, Post reporter Janet Cooke was awarded a Pultizer Prize. Later, Cooke said she made up Jimmy and resigned.

Washington Post Timeline

1979: Donald E. Graham, 33, takes over as publisher of The Post. Katharine Graham remains chief executive of the corporation. After the acquisition of the Times-Herald in 1954, Don's grandfather Eugene Meyer had remarked, "The real significance of this event is that it makes the paper safe for Donnie."

One of the new publisher's first actions is to promote Meg Greenfield to editor of the editorial page. Greenfield becomes a proponent of women's rights and quietly helps the careers of many other female journalists.

1980: The Post publishes a breathtaking story about a young heroin addict by reporter Janet Cooke. "Jimmy is 8 years old and a third generation heroin addict, a precocious little boy with sandy hair, velvety brown eyes and needle marks freckling the baby-smooth skin of his thin brown arms," the story begins. "Jimmy's World" wins a Pulitzer Prize in 1981, but contradictions about Cooke's resume are immediately discovered by other news organizations. Under intense questioning by Post editors, Cooke admits her riveting story was entirely fabricated and the Pulitzer is returned.

The Post makes the switch from "hot type," in which each line is created from molten metal, to computer-generated, or "cold type." The change marks the end of the Linotype machine that had so enthralled founder Stilson Hutchins.

1981: The Washington Star ceases publication, leaving The Post as the only daily newspaper in Washington until the arrival of the Washington Times less than a year later.



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which I deeply regret. I apologize to my newspaper, my profession, the Pulitzer board and all seekers of the truth. Today, in facing up to the truth, I have submitted my resignation. JanetCooke.”

Read “The Players: It Wasn’t a Game,” the full account of the Janet Cooke story written by Bill Green, the Post’s ombudsman at the time.

In May 2003, The New York Times revealed that 27-year-old Jayson Blair, a Times reporter, had deceived his editors and fabricated stories. He plagiarized quotations from other newspapers’ reporters’ stories, he used online sources rather than go to eyewitness events and interview sources. Read “New York Times Story Gives Texas Paper Sense of Déjà vu: San Antonio Editor Cites ‘Damning’ Similarity” for comparisons of original articles and Blair’s plagiarism and for a summary of the Blair case read “N.Y. Times Uncovers Dozens Of Faked Stories by Reporter” by Howard Kurtz.

The experience of two bright, young reporters at two respected newspapers, presented some of the same questions. What do you think?

1. Are young reporters prepared sufficiently to work at the largest newspapers?
2. Can personal ambition cloud a reporter’s news judgment and respect for facts?
3. Could the assistant managing editors’ drive to have page one stories cause them to fail to vet reporters, to ask the right questions and to check stories carefully? Bill Green, Post ombudsman in 1981, stated: “The competition to get on page one is so strong that its effects probably cannot be understood even by the top editors. It is one source, if not

the central source, of newsroom pressures. To have a story selected for page one is good strokes, an ego trip.” Ben Bradlee said of the budget meeting process of deciding the page one stories: “It means you have to have intelligent people you can trust tell you about the best they have to offer and you have to make up your mind.”

4. Do facts get lost in the attempt to write a dramatic and compelling story?

5. To what extent did the race of the young reporter influence how he or she was treated? Both were considered charming, good looking, ambitious and talented. Newspapers and other media want a more diverse staff, one that reflects the communities they cover. Did Cooke and Blair rise within the organization because of their race rather than ability, because of their race and ability or because of their ability?

6. Does the public believe that reporters “play” with the facts and reword interviews? Newspapers, and other news media, cannot be fully trusted to inform the public. In April 1981, columnist Ellen Goodman wrote of credibility being the journalist’s only credential. “But it’s hard to explain what this means to those of us in the business who have only one credential: our credibility. This is a society running short on trust. Most journalists deal with this fact every day. We’re assigned the role of public trustee.” (“Credibility: Our Only Credential,” April 22, 1981, Post, A23)

Both Jayson Blair and Janet Cooke failed to do their jobs as reporters. They also failed to practice a basic rule that we are all asked to follow: Tell the truth.

Post Sources

On the Web

➤ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/metro/daily/may03/jimmysworld.html>

“Jimmy’s World,” Janet Cooke, Sept. 28, 1980.

On April 14, 1981, this important correction is added. Correction: The following article is not factually correct and is a fabrication by the author. For a detailed account of how it came to be published by The Washington Post, please see the article by Bill Green, then the newspaper’s reader ombudsman, published in The Post on April 19, 1981.

➤ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/metro/daily/may03/cooke041981.html>

“THE PLAYERS: It Wasn’t a Game,” Bill Green, April 19, 1981; Page A12.

➤ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A40536-2003May10.html>

“N.Y. Times Uncovers Dozens Of Faked Stories by Reporter,” Howard Kurtz, May 11, 2003; Page A1

➤ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A57290-2003Apr29.html>

“New York Times Story Gives Texas Paper Sense of Déjà vu: San Antonio Editor Cites ‘Damning’ Similarity,” Howard Kurtz, April 30, 2003; Page C1



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YOU and YOUR RIGHTS

I Want My MTV: Music Censorship in America

Popular music has been feared, and censored, for as long as it has been around. The FBI has investigated everyone from the notorious one-hit-wonders The Kingsmen (of “Louie Louie” fame) to the pioneering gangsta rap trio N.W.A whose 1988 song “F... Tha Police” caused controversy. Meanwhile, parents have tried to keep their kids away from everyone from Frank Sinatra to the Beatles to Eminem. As for the kids, in the words of the ‘80s pop group Dire Straits, they just want their MTV.

To understand music censorship, it is important to first understand music’s role in society, particularly among the youth who are most often those that censors seek to protect. Music is not just beats and melodies. In many ways, music is the epicenter of youth culture. As suggested by the title of a popular contemporary television program, musicians are, indeed, the American idols. It is no coincidence that MTV, Music Television, is America’s most popular adolescent-targeted network.

Music is what youth have to call their own. Sure, kids idolize movie stars and ballplayers, but so do their mothers and fathers. Music is theirs. It is theirs from the very first Beatles, Prince, Marilyn Manson or Snoop Doggy Dog album they brought home and their parents did not understand. DJ Jazzy Jeff and The Fresh Prince (now known simply as Will Smith) even put out a hit rap single appropriately titled “Parents Just Don’t Understand.”

It is true. Parents do not understand their children’s music, just as their

parents did not understand theirs. And, as tends to be the case, they fear what they do not understand. This fear finally came to a head in September of 1985 when Tipper Gore, wife of then-Senator Al Gore, led a group called the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) to Capitol Hill for a special Senate hearing on rock lyrics. Though no government-imposed censorship resulted, Gore’s efforts are largely thought to be, at least in part, responsible for the Parental Advisory labels that have graced record labels since the early 1990s. Parental Advisory labels are a voluntary preemptive measure on the part of Recording Industry of America. The hip-hop industry has also self-censored. In the 2001 Hip-Hop Summit, organized by Def Jam executive and hip-hop trail blazer Russell Simmons, the industry agreed to place warning labels not only on album covers, but also on promotional materials and to indicate when non-explicit versions are also available.

Radio stations, television networks and record store chains have taken other voluntary actions in response to and to avoid public criticism. Madonna, for one, has been a frequent target of such censorship. MTV has aired only in late night format or completely banned several of her videos for sexual content (“Erotica”) and violence (“What it Feels Like for a Girl”). Many videos such as the Duran Duran video “Girls on Film” featured portions blurred out to avoid exposing young viewers to sexual content. This practice did

not start with MTV. In 1957, CBS only broadcasted Elvis Presley’s third performance on the Ed Sullivan show from the waist up because of the public controversy after Presley’s gyrating hips made it onto the screen in his first two Sullivan appearances. In 1991 Wal-Mart stopped carrying albums with Parental Advisory labels fearing a blow to its family-based reputation.

Music censorship is not limited to protecting children. Censorship of the sometimes thin line between political and obscene speech is an important issue in music. The earlier mentioned NWA song “F... Tha Police” is not alone in its sentiment. Around the same time the political rap duo Public Enemy released “911 is a joke” and Ice-T put out the beyond controversial song “Cop Killer.” The backlash included NWA’s album containing “F... Tha Police,” “Straight Outta Compton” being ruled legally obscene by a Tennessee court.

The artists all claim that their music is not obscene, but rather protest music in the vane of Bob Marley and John Lennon. The artists claim that they are simply portraying the experiences and sentiments of many African-Americans and others who feel unprotected and profiled by police.

It is not only rap groups whose political speech is sometimes deemed to have crossed the line. Recently due to their criticism of President George W. Bush and the War in Iraq, the Dixie Chicks were dropped from many country radio station play lists. Following September 11 many stations voluntarily refrained from playing

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YOU and YOUR RIGHTS

I Want My MTV: Music Censorship in America

music with references to bombs, planes or terrorism. In response to the 1985 Senate hearings, rock star John “Cougar” Mellencamp and folk musician John Denver both were outspoken in expressing their fears of the slippery slope where political music would not be immune from censorship supposedly targeted at lewd and youth-inappropriate music.

According to Eric Nuzum, author of *Parental Advisory: Music Censorship in America*, African-American artists have been disproportionately targeted by censors. In 2001, The Federal Trade Commission released a list of CDs that are “bad” for children. “Of the 35 artists on that list, 30 of them were black, and only three of those acts contained exclusively white members,” said Nuzum.

Chances are music censorship will always be a controversial issue. But the bottom line is this question: Do we need to be protected from music?

After we ask that question there are several more equally important subsequent questions. What music do we need to be protected from? Who needs to be protected? Who gets to decide what and who? And what are the criteria?

Discussion Questions

After students have completed the “Censored or Not?” exercise, use the following questions to generate discussion.

1. Do students agree with any of the acts of censorship? What, if any, are reasonable restrictions on rights of free expression?

2. Should certain music not be played in public? Who should determine which music is too offensive to play?

3. Which act of censorship do students feel is most against the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of speech?

4. Recently, a number of radio stations refused to play the music of certain groups, such as the Dixie Chicks, who openly criticized President Bush during the U.S.’s war in Iraq. Shortly following September 11, 2001, a number of songs including John Lennon’s “Imagine” were also banned from the radio because they were determined to be political speech. Should distinctions be made between songs that are banned because they contain too much discussion about drugs, sex or violence, and music that contains controversial social and political messages?

WHAT IS CENSORSHIP?

Censorship, the suppression of words, images, or ideas that are “offensive,” happens whenever some people succeed in imposing their personal political or moral values on others. Censorship can be carried out by the government as well as private pressure groups. Censorship by the government is unconstitutional.

In contrast, when private individuals or groups organize boycotts against stores that sell magazines of which they disapprove, their actions are protected by the First Amendment, although they can become dangerous in the extreme. ... private censorship campaigns are best countered by groups and individuals speaking out and organizing in defense of the threatened expression.

—American Civil Liberties Union

YOU and YOUR RIGHTS

The Marshall-Brennan Fellowship Program at American University’s Washington College of Law trains upper-level law students to teach a course on constitutional rights and responsibilities to hundreds of students in Washington, D.C. area public high schools. For more information about the program, please contact Michelle Carhart, program coordinator, at mcarhart@wcl.american.edu. For curricular information or information on how to get involved, please contact Maryam Ahranjani, academic coordinator, at mahranjani@wcl.american.edu.

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Censored or Not?

Which of these music censorship events actually occurred in the United States?

1. In the 1950's, a number of communities banned jukeboxes from playing rock 'n' roll music near churches and swimming pools.
2. The cameras were not allowed to show any pictures of Elvis Presley below the waist on Ed Sullivan's late-night TV show in 1957 because Elvis's movements were "too suggestive."
3. In 1962, Catholic schools in New York City banned Chubby Checker's "The Twist" because religious leaders thought it was lewd.
4. In the early 1970s, the Federal Communication Commission, the U.S. governmental agency that regulates television and radio communication, wrote threatening letters to radio stations for playing songs that they felt glorified drug use.
5. In 1972, John Denver's song "Rocky Mountain High" was banned on several radio stations because station directors feared the song was written about drug use.
6. In the late 1970s, Jesse Jackson criticized disco music, stating that it encouraged sexual promiscuity and drug use.
7. In the mid-1980s, the U.S. Surgeon General stated that rock 'n' roll music promoted violence and pornography.
8. In 1997, Marilyn Manson's inclusion in Ozzfest resulted in box office officials refusing to sell tickets to the concert.
9. In 1998, members of the Florida State Legislature refused to fund certain public radio stations because legislators objected to several songs that the stations had played.
10. In 2000, a Louisiana sheriff argued that rap and hip-hop music had contributed to a fight at a roller rink; the sheriff seized 60 CDs from the roller DJ stating it was "evidence of the crime."



FILE PHOTO—THE WASHINGTON POST

Elvis Presley plays a convict who becomes a rock star in this scene from the 1957 film "Jailhouse Rock."



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I Want My MTV: Music Censorship in America

In the mid-1980's, a number of concerned parents and public figures formed the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) to convince members of the recording industry to voluntarily place parental warning labels on music that was determined to be "inappropriate" for children. A U.S. Senate committee has convened a hearing. PMRC members and musicians have been invited to present their positions at today's session.

Voluntary Parental Advisory Labels?

PMRC MEMBER

You are a parent of young children. Your oldest daughter just turned 12 years old. Your daughter received a number of CDs for her birthday, which she has been listening to non-stop for the past few weeks. You, however, had not heard of these artists before and became curious about the type of music your daughter enjoyed. After playing the first CD, you were appalled by how sexually suggestive the lyrics were, and felt that the teenage singer was promoting sexual activity for young girls. You joined the Parents Music Resource Center because you wanted some type of warning label to be affixed to CDs like those given to your daughter in order to alert parents to music that promotes sexual activity, violence, drug use, or any other behavior you find inappropriate for children. You are extremely rigid in your position, and often unwilling to listen to even reasonable attempts at compromise. You believe listeners and parents have a right to be better informed about the subject matter of music lyrics.

Do your research. Determine which members of your group will present your position to the Senators. Begin your presentation by listing your arguments.

MUSICIAN

You are opposed to instituting a rating system for music. You believe this is a form of censorship that is dangerous and contrary to the guarantees of the First Amendment. You are wary of certain people having the control to determine which forms of music are inappropriate. You are also concerned that songs containing controversial social or political messages will be censored because of their unpopularity. You are very distrustful of the positions of the PMRC members, but wish to make a good impression on the Senate Committee members by listening to opposing arguments.

Do your research. Determine which members of your group will present your position to the Senators. Begin your presentation by listing your arguments.

SENATORS

Although the legislators hearing the arguments are not charged with making a final decision concerning whether there should be legislation for or against parental advisory labels, each student legislator should listen to arguments from both sides with open minds. While the other groups are preparing their arguments, the Senators should research parental warning labels so they know why they were suggested and can judge how effective they have been. In making his or her recommendation, the student Senator should weigh personal beliefs on the issue, and how he/she anticipates his/her constituents will feel about the issue. A few of the Senators believe there should be tougher government restrictions than voluntary labels. One Senator, in particular, believes that advertising of albums with explicit content in magazines that are popular with teens should be controlled.

Senators should formulate a list of questions for both PMRC members and testifying artists. The following are suggested questions:

How effective do you think music ratings will be?

Should music stores be punished for selling music with violent or sexually suggestive lyrics to young children?

Are you most concerned about violent content in music? Sexual content? Unpopular political expression?